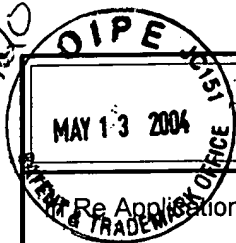


AF/3627/\$



MAY 13 2004

TRANSMITTAL OF APPEAL BRIEF (Large Entity)

Docket No.
99115 (BLI-0077)

Re Application Of: EUGENE OWEN JR.

Serial No.
09/728,705Filing Date
December 1, 2000Examiner
Lynda C. JasminGroup Art Unit
3627Invention: METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR AUTOMATIC TRACKING AND BALANCING
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Signature

Dated: May 10, 2004

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICANT: EUGENE OWEN JR.)
)
SERIAL NO.: 09/728,705) ART UNIT
) 3627
FILED: December 1, 2000)
) EXAMINER:
FOR: METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR) Jasmin,
) Lynda C.
AUTOMATIC TRACKING AND)
BALANCING BILLING DATA)

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APPEAL BRIEF

1. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest in this Appeal is the Assignee, BellSouth Intellectual Property Corporation.

2. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no related appeals or interferences known at this time to the Appellant, or the Appellant's legal representatives which will directly affect, or be directly affected by, or have a bearing upon the Board's decision in this appeal.

3. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-23 are pending in the application.

Claims 1-23 have been finally rejected. The outstanding Final Office Action rejects claims 1-23 as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) being unpatentable over Crooks in view of Northington.

The rejection of claims 1-23 is appealed.

4. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

There have been no amendments after the Final Office Action of December 12, 2003. The claims on Appeal are attached hereto as an Appendix.

5. SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The following is a concise explanation of the invention. Reference to the specification and/or drawings is made pursuant to 37 CFR 1.192 and is not intended to limit the claims to the embodiments shown and described in the application.

Embodiments of the invention are directed to bill processing by a bill processing entity on behalf of a service provider. The bill processing entity handles the processing of bills to save the service provider time as described in paragraph [0003]. A service provider, such as a carrier, provides billing data to a processing entity (PE) for processing (paragraph [0013]). The accounts receivable provided to the PE is referred to as preprocessed accounts receivable. Once the PE processes the bills, the pre-processed amount is reconciled with the processed amount to confirm that the appropriate funds have been collected (paragraph [0017]). If these amounts match, the carrier is paid and a settlement report is printed. If these amounts do not match, the error is flagged and a discrepancy report is generated (paragraph [0018]).

6. ISSUES

Whether claims 1-23 are patentable over Crooks in view of Northington.

7. GROUPING OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-23 stand or fall together.

8. ARGUMENT

Prior to discussing the claims in detail, a summary of Crooks is provided. Crooks is directed to a billing system in which a billing entity consolidates bills and provides the consolidated bills to a billable entity. In one embodiment, an audit process is performed in which a billing amount is compared to a tolerance parameter to determine if the billing amount is accurate (see column 5, lines 13-67). One tolerance parameter, relied upon by the Examiner, is historical billing data that includes past billing information from a previous billing cycle. If the current billing information exceeds past billing information by a predetermined amount, then the billing information can be denied.

In applying Crooks, the Examiner construed the historical billing information to correspond to the claimed “pre-processed accounts receivable.” Appellant disagrees with this interpretation of Crooks. Crooks does not teach pre-processed accounts receivable as recited in claim 1. In the claim 1, the pre-processed accounts receivable is defined as “being the total amount of the accounts receivable inputted to the processing entity by said carrier.” In claim 1, the pre-processed accounts receivable is compared to the processed accounts receivables to determine if sufficient funds have been collected. Crooks fails to teach pre-processed accounts receivable that are compared to accounts receivable to detect a discrepancy.

The tolerance parameters in Crooks are based on past billing data. The pre-processed account receivables in claim 1 correspond to total amount of the accounts receivable inputted to the processing entity by said carrier. These are current account receivable data submitted for processing, not an average based on historical data as described in Crooks. The most recent billing data referenced by Crooks is one previous billing cycle (column 5, lines 36-40). Thus, the historical billing data in Crooks used to define the tolerance parameters is not the same as the pre-processed account receivables in claim 1.

Furthermore, the historical billing data in Crooks cannot be compared to the processed data because the audit process is performed prior to processing the billing information to provide the consolidated amount to each billable entity (col. 6, lines 40-41). In other words, in Crooks the processed billing information is not even generated if the historical data and the pre-processed data does not match within a certain tolerance.

Thus, it is not clear how the alleged pre-processed data can be compared to the processed data in Crooks when the processed data does not exist at the time the pre-processed data is utilized. This is different from claim 1 in which the accounts receivable are processed prior to comparing the total amount of processed accounts receivable with the total amount of pre-processed accounts.

For the above reasons, Crooks fails to teach comparing pre-processed billing data to processed billing data. Northington was relied upon for disclosing discrepancy and settlement reporting but fails to cure the deficiencies of Crooks discussed above with reference to claim 1. Accordingly, claim 1 is patentable over Crooks and Northington. Claims 2-15 variously depend from claim 1 and are patentable over Crooks and Northington for at least the reasons advanced with respect to claim 1.

Claims 16-23 include features similar to those discussed above with reference to claim 1 and are patentable over Crooks and Northington for at least the reasons advanced with respect to claim 1.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Appellant requests reversal of the rejection of claims 1-23.

If there are any charges with respect to this response or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account 06-1130 maintained by Appellant's attorneys.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX

1. A method of automatically tracking and balancing account receivable data comprising:
 - submitting a billing data file to a processing entity, said billing data file comprising customer account records representing accounts receivable for a given carrier;
 - determining each of said customer account records as one of at least two tracking data sets based on pre-defined criteria;
 - computing a total amount of accounts receivable for said customer account records located in each tracking data set related to said given carrier;
 - generating a total amount of processed accounts receivable related to said given carrier by adding the computed total amounts of accounts receivable of the at least two tracking data sets;
 - comparing a total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable related to said given carrier to the total amount of processed accounts receivable related to said carrier, the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable being the total amount of the accounts receivable inputted to the processing entity by said carrier;
 - creating a discrepancy report comprising said carrier if the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable does not equal the total amount of processed accounts receivables; and
 - creating a settlement report for said carrier if the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable equals the total amount of processed accounts receivable.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising routing said discrepancy report to at least one location accessible to at least one discrepancy source-identifier.
3. The method of claim 1 further comprising routing said settlement report to at least one location accessible to at least one end-user of said settlement report.
4. The method of claim 2 or 3 wherein said at least one location is a workstation connected to the processing entity by a local network.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein said customer account records comprise a unique means to identify the carrier that generated the customer account records.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said customer account records further comprise a customer account number.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein said customer account records further comprise the amount payable for services rendered by said carrier.

8. The method of claim 5 wherein said customer account records further comprise a billing cycle in which the customer account is payable.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the billing cycle is the criteria used to determine each of the customer account records as one of said tracking data sets.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the tracking data sets include a billed data set wherein said billed data set comprises said customer account records with accounts payable in a current billing cycle.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein the tracking data sets include an unbilled data set wherein said unbilled data set comprises said customer account records with accounts payable in a further billing cycle.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the tracking data sets include an error data set wherein said error data set comprises invalid customer account records.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the discrepancy report comprises:
the total amount of accounts receivable data submitted to the processing entity relating to said given carrier; and

the total amount of accounts receivable data located in each tracking data set relating to said carrier.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the settlement report comprises the amount of accounts receivable located in each tracking data set relating said carrier.

15. The method of claim 1 further comprising establishing an agreement between a plurality of said carriers and said processing entity, said carriers agreeing to submit said billing data files to the processing entity and said processing entity agreeing to process said billing data files and remit payment to said carriers.

16. A system for automatically tracking and balancing account receivable data comprising:

a carrier submitting a billing data file to a processing entity, said billing data file comprising customer account records representing accounts receivable for said carrier;
and

the processing entity,

determining each of said customer account records as one of at least two tracking data sets based on pre-defined criteria;

computing a total amount of accounts receivable for said customer account records located in each tracking data set related to said carrier;

generating a total amount of processed accounts receivable related to said carrier by adding the computed total amounts of accounts receivable of the at least two tracking data sets;

comparing a total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable related to said carrier to the total amount of processed accounts receivable related to said carrier, the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable being the total amount of the accounts receivable inputted to the processing entity by said carrier;

creating a discrepancy report comprising said carrier if the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable does not equal the total amount of processed accounts receivables; and

creating a settlement report for said carrier if the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable equals the total amount of processed accounts receivable.

17. The system of claim 16 further comprising a notification device routing said discrepancy report to at least one location accessible to at least one discrepancy source-identifier.

18. The system of claim 16 further comprising a notification device routing said settlement report to at least one location accessible to at least one end-user of said settlement report.

19. The system of claim 16 wherein the processing entity includes a data storage device storing said billing data files submitted to the processing entity and storing said tracking data sets.

20. The system of claim 16 wherein the processing entity includes a tracking device determining each of said customer account records as one of said at least two tracking data sets based on said pre-defined criteria.

21. The system of claim 16 wherein the processing entity includes a reconciliation device,

copying said carrier's accounts receivable from said tracking data sets based on said pre-defined criteria;

generating the total amount of processed accounts receivable for said carrier;

comparing the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable with the total amount of processed accounts receivable for said carrier;

creating a discrepancy report if the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable does not equal the total amount of processed accounts receivable for said carrier; and

creating a settlement report if the total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable equals the total amount of processed accounts receivable for said carrier.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein said discrepancy report contains a list of carriers whose total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable did not equal the total amount of processed accounts receivable for said carrier.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein said settlement report contains the total accounts receivable computed in each tracking data set for said carrier whose total amount of pre-processed accounts receivable equals the total amount of processed accounts receivable for said carrier.